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Representations of Peripheral Space in Iraqi Kurdistan

Andrea Fischer-Tahir

1 Official media of the leading parties and of the Regional Government of Kurdistan in Iraq describe the cities of Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaimaniya[1] as sites of economic growth and prosperity in order to legitimate its authority and to invite foreign capital. This policy includes academic representations, forms of "othering", and the use of the international public as a witness to the success.[2] A glance at the official organ of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) can be revealing! On 12 May 2009, for example, *Kurdistan-î Nwê* presented the headline "World Bank Describes Kurdistan as Development Star in Iraqi Sky. 93% Development in Kurdistan Region".[3] Follows an article based on information from the Sulaimaniya Statistics Directorate, a panorama picture of Sulaimaniya showing new bridges, multi-storey housing complexes and business buildings, and a diagram of Iraq's governorates comparing the economic wealth of Kurdistan to the poverty in other areas – those of "the failed Arabs", as the article suggests. What this article conceals, however, are figures available at the Statistics Directorate that indicate a sharp discrepancy in Kurdistan itself between people in the city and people in the villages.[4] This discrepancy is likewise evident in data provided by the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) in cooperation with Iraqi and Kurdish ministries in 2008. Here, Sulaimaniya city is labelled "better off", whereas certain districts in the governorate of Sulaimaniya are considered "extremely vulnerable" in terms of food security, which is measured by rates of employment, education, income and buying power, expenditure, household assets, access to productive assets, water, and electricity.[5]

2 One such district is Qaradagh in the south-west of Sulaimaniya city, an area consisting of 86 villages and a centre also called Qaradagh (Qaradagh-C). Qaradagh was completely destroyed during the genocidal *Anfal* campaign of 1988. In the aftermath of the Kurdish uprising in 1991, many returned to rebuild it, initially on their own and later supported by international organizations.[6] In 1992, Erbil became the capital of the Kurdistan Region. In the course of the Kurdish militia war (1994-1998), the PUK established a

second seat of government in Sulaimaniya – as a counter-project to Erbil, which had been conquered by the other leading party: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). After the Iraqi elections of January 2005, PUK and KDP began a process of unification and centralization in Erbil. Sulaimaniya lost some of its administrative importance, but remained the political and economic centre of the south and south-east of Kurdistan. However, there is no sign of a "development boom" in Qaradagh. On the contrary, agricultural production in the district is fading fast so that local marketing from the villages to Sulaimaniya through Qaradagh-C no longer exists. Most families in Qaradagh-C depend on state incomes and public food distribution, while other options are, compared to the city, very few and far between. At the same time, it seems to be unclear what kind of residence place Qaradagh-C actually is. In contrast to international organizations, technocrats of the governorate administration tend to label the place "urban",[7] and the political decision-makers undertake steps to revalue Qaradagh-C; they opened a university and started to build housing complexes. My observations in the years between 1993 and 2009 indicate that local people too see Qaradagh-C as a former town repeatedly destroyed and neglected. People tend, however, critically to notice their dependency on Sulaimaniya with regard to income, food supply, and political decision-making.

3 What is the concept of "development" propagated by the Kurdish rulers? How are concepts of "urban" and "rural" related to "development"? What explains Qaradagh-C's dependency on Sulaimaniya? How do people in Qaradagh-C deal with their dependency on the centre? Starting from these questions, I take a closer look at centre-periphery relations in Kurdistan. I argue that a combination of circumstances resulted in the unilateral economic and political dependency of Qaradagh on Sulaimaniya, positioning the former on the periphery of the latter. I describe the consequences of this dependency, both on a collective and an individual level, the latter to be exemplified with the aid of biographical representation. Subsequently, I turn the focus to technocratic, academic, and political representations of Qaradagh-C in discourses of governance, writing history, and nation building, arguing that these representations at first sight appear to integrate the area into the "development sky" but in reality do little to reduce dependency. On the contrary, they contribute to peripherization.

4 By using the term "peripherization", I refer to a recent debate in German social sciences on infrastructural disparities, shrinking cities, and out-migration in eastern Germany. Here, "peripherization" refers to the growing economic, infrastructural, and political disconnection of small- and medium-sized towns in terms of development and is discussed as a form of social injustice [Keim 2006; Barlösius and Neu eds. 2008; Beetz *et al.* 2008]. This approach echoes debates on core/periphery, world system, and dependency in the 1970s and 1980s [Amin 1976; Wallerstein 1980; Mj#toset and Clausen eds. 2007]. In current Middle Eastern studies, "periphery", "peripheral", and "peripherization" in the context of the global world are terms only casually met. Yet, there are numerous authors turning the focus to centre-periphery relations inside the states of the Middle East. Recently, Lisa Wedeen [2008] described public spheres and political performances in Yemen as a "weak state", incapable of distributing goods and preventing violence, while Conrad Schetter and Rainer Glassner discussed as regards Afghanistan what happens when "the periphery has gained the ability to impose its interests to the centre" [2009: 118]. In the research on Kurdistan in Iraq, centre-periphery relations are merely explored as "Kurdistan versus the Iraqi state" [Stansfield 2003; Ahmed and Gunter 2005; O'Leary and McGarry eds. 2005; Stansfield

and Ahmadzadeh 2007; Natalie 2010]. By contrast, I want to draw attention to those forms of power and dependency that obtain within the Kurdistan Region itself.

Urban, Rural, and Development

5 Very little research has been done on "rural" or "urban" space in Iraqi Kurdistan. One of the few works dealing with the "rural" sphere is Arian Mahzouni's "Participatory Local Governance for Sustainable Community-Driven Development" in Iraqi Kurdistan [2008]. Trained in political economy, he analyses "the role of existing local institutions as part of social capital in the community development process in the rural area" and states "the need to introduce 'participatory local governance' where political and institutional reforms are carried out to increase the capacity and authority of the local institutions" [*ibid.:* 11]. A separate approach is pursued by Ehmed Mihemmed Salih, a "teacher for issues of the geography of village residence and planning" at the University of Sulaimaniya, as stated in Kurdish on his book cover [2008]. Salih is concerned with the district of Sharbajêr east of Sulaimaniya. Believing one of the key reasons for "failed development" outside the cities to be "the village inhabitants' lack of professional knowledge", the geographer calls on the Kurdish government to design "a new programme for the development of the villages" [*ibid.:* 5]. The world views behind these approaches and the proposed strategies obviously differ greatly. Whereas Mahzouni considers people in the rural areas as to be the main players of "community development", Salih shows little confidence in their capabilities and prefers "development" from above. What is also interesting is Mahzouni's certainty in applying in his PhD thesis, published in English, the term "rural" not only to villages but also to small-sized towns and district centres; Qaradagh-C, for example, appears as "rural sub-district centre" and other places are designated as "rural small towns" [Mahzouni 2008: 69-78]. But Salih's job description as "geographer of the village residence" indicates that the concepts of "urban" and "rural" are not so clear in Kurdish.

6 Although standard population data collection and academic research frequently prefer to categorize places as either "urban" or "rural", social changes "have involved the blurring of the urban-rural distinction" [Champion and Graeme eds. 2004: 3]. There is a tradition of inventing new concepts to reflect these changes [Cloke 1977; Cromartie and Swanson 1996] and a debate that goes beyond the "rural-urban continuum" and other concepts closely linked to affirmative theories of modernization [Halfacree 1993: 25]. The shift in rural studies inspired by the cultural turn favours immaterial approaches and puts forward the idea that "the rural" should be taken "not as a clearly identifiable space, or as a verifiable of social or economic characteristics, but as a meaningful concept, discursively constructed, understood and related to in different ways by diverse social groups" [Holloway and Kneafsey eds. 2004: 2]. The same applies to "the urban".

7 In Kurdish-Soranî there are three words to represent imaginations of village: *dê*, *ladê* and *gund*. "*Gund*" in the form "*gundî*" or "*gundnişîn*" serves to express "someone living in a village". The term "*ladêyî*" means more or less the same but also "village-like"; it is frequently applied pejoratively by the Sulaimaniya middle class to sanction someone of lower status for "inappropriate behaviour" or to distinguish oneself from the lower class. There is no clearly corresponding term for the English "rural" or "rurality". Kurdish technocrats educated in Arabic tend to use Arabic terms. For "city" the

representation is "*şar*", meaning also "civilized land". There are several compounds and derivations of it: "*şaroçke*" for "small city" or "town", "*şarî*" for "city-like", "civil" and "city dweller", but also for "urban" while "*be şaristanî kirdin*" is nowadays translated into English with "urbanization". The word "*şarezayî*" represents imaginations of "experience", "knowledge", "competence" and "capability" and is frequently used in the meaning of "expert". Obviously, the social discourse relates certain characteristics to residential places, and not surprisingly are imaginations of modern civilization rather attached to "city". Therefore, the label "urban" suggests having arrived at a certain stage of "development" or "*geşepêdan*", which is the Kurdish term meaning literally: "to make something bloom". The dominant political discourse in Kurdistan favours a concept of "development" linked to construction and building boom, access to modern technology and consumer goods, and the extension of infrastructure in the fields of health and higher education. Shopping malls in the governorate centres, airports in Erbil and Sulaimaniya, 6 state and 7 private universities have been made symbols of the government's success. Only some non-governmental organizations and grass-root groups pursue a different concept of "development" and relate the term to social change, and thus to a shift in norms and values, and in social relations [Koste 2005].

Oil Economy, War, and the Forgotten outside the Cities

8 The name Qaradagh refers to three different things: a) a settlement situated about 40 kilometres south-west of Sulaimaniya city centre; b) the countryside framed by a northeastern and southwestern mountain range and c) Qopî Qaradagh, which is part of the mountain range, the highest peak of which reaches approximately 1,800 metres above sea level. 'Ebdulla Ghefûr's *Dictionary of Kurdistan Geography* specifies that the area covers 668 km^2 [2008: 150]. The city of Sulaimaniya was founded in the neighbouring Sharizur plain in 1784 as the new capital of the Kurdish Baban Emirate. In the 1920s, about 41,100 people lived in the city. The population of Qaradagh at that time was 10,000 [Edmonds 1957: 439]. In 1991, Sulaimaniya consisted of 27 quarters and had a population of about 600,000. By 2009, the city had 700,000 inhabitants and the number of quarters had soared to 136. The population of Qaradagh in 2009 was 12,000, including the 1,700 inhabitants of Qaradagh-C.[8]

9 Agriculture in Qaradagh involved producing wheat and barley, rice along the small rivers, tobacco, and honey, as well as fruit and vegetables. Since most of Qaradagh was pasture land, people kept sheep and goats. Qaradagh-C supplied handicrafts (carpentry, metalwork, tailoring), had a local bazaar and served intermediary trade between this area and the market in Sulaimaniya. In contrast to the large plains of Kurdistan, the hilly terrain of Qaradagh showed little evidence of that sharp injustice of a few landlord families in possession of vast areas of land, on the one hand, and the mass of landless villagers dependent on them, on the other [Batatu 1978]. Yet, access to land and water depended on origins; the tribal were more privileged than the non-tribal. As elsewhere in Iraq, landless villagers benefited from reform laws in 1958 and 1970. However, the city was offering new jobs, improved access to health care, education, electricity, and consumer goods. In Iraq, migration to the cities was significantly higher in the 1920s and 1930s due to British land policies and again in the 1970s as a result of the oil boom. At the end of the 1970s, the "rentier state" Iraq began to subsidize imported food and

created a state-controlled system of public food distribution to supply the inhabitants with staples such as flour, rice, and sugar. Thus, crop-growing and the cultivation of rice became unprofitable [Gabbay 1978; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett 1987].

10 In the 1980s, most parts of Qaradagh were controlled by the Kurdish Peshmerga. The guerrilla fighters established a system of local village councils, called "*encumen*" (council). These consisted of men of the village community who politically represented it towards the Peshmerga. In March-April 1988, some of the villages were attacked with chemical weapons; all of the villages and Qaradagh-C were ultimately destroyed and the area heavily mined. Many of the survivors were deported to the collective towns.[9] People began to return after the uprising and rebuild their old homes. During the economic crisis in the mid-1990s, which was caused by the UN embargo on Iraq and the internal embargo imposed by Baghdad on Kurdistan, the people in Qaradagh benefited from the partial revival of agriculture. At the same time, the middle and lower classes in Sulaimaniya, who had lost their state salaries, were selling their carpets and jewellery to buy food. This ceased with the UN Oil-for-Food Programme in 1996-1997. The programme improved conditions in the city, but called the revitalization of agriculture into question.

11 Faced with economic crisis and militia war since the mid-1990s, tens of thousands of upper-and middle-class urban men and women migrated to Europe. However, most families in the areas affected by the Anfal campaign lacked the economic, social, and cultural capital for emigration.[10] When Sulaimaniya began to benefit from remittances some years later, Qaradagh-C was left empty-handed. After the Iraq War of 2003, the opening of the region to foreign investment capital, the full reintegration of Kurdistan into the Iraqi oil economy, the construction boom and market expansion all contributed to enhancing the cities of Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaimaniya. During this period, lack of rain caused 80% of the springs and small rivers in Qaradagh to dry out. Crop-growing and rice cultivation were abandoned, and animal breeding seriously harmed.[11] As a result, Qaradagh-C's intermediary trade in local goods became redundant. At the same time, the drying-out of the springs in Qaradagh-C – three springs were used collectively in the 1990s – posed a threat to drinking water maintenance and the cultivation of fruit and vegetables in the gardens. In order to provide inhabitants with a minimum of water, the municipality contracted a private company to bring water from a river in the Sharizur plain to Qaradagh-C. In winter 2008, water was distributed once every ten days, and in September 2009 this was increased to once every four days.[12] Although Qaradagh-C has partly revitalized some forms of handicraft and a small bazaar with shops that sell food, clothing, and other goods, most commodities come from Turkey and Iran via Sulaimaniya. The majority of the adult labour force earns salaries as state employees of the municipality, the departments of agriculture and irrigation, health and education, construction, and the interior. Since incomes are inadequate, people depend on public food distribution. This is in sharp contrast to Sulaimaniya city. Here, the plurality of sectors and job opportunities allows most people to earn enough – often with two or more jobs – to dispense with public food distribution or selling the goods at the market [Fischer-Tahir 2009: 34-37].

12 The *Anfal* campaign, the climate and the "inhabitants' lack of knowledge" – as asserted by geographer Ehmed Mihemmed Salih [2008] – are not the sole reason for the decline of agriculture in places like Qaradagh. The ruling parties and the government favour

the cities; officials in Kurdistan justify this with the statistical argument that most Kurds live in the governorate centres. The absence of agricultural planning and community development by the Kurdish authorities, the scant access to electricity, health care, higher education, communication networks, consumer goods, and to the new leisure parks make life in the villages and small-sized towns unattractive. Thus, young men tend to seek well-paid jobs with the police or security organizations in the cities and border areas. This also holds true for Qaradagh-C, although, in contrast to the villages, it boasts education and health services as well as the presence of political, cultural, and religious organizations. There are three mosques, some political parties run small offices there, and a house built in 1992-1993 by a German relief organization became a temporary PUK women's centre and a youth centre. The PUK Women's Union has run a library for several years. Due to lack of funds, however, the Union's secretary in Sulaimaniya recently decided to hand it over to the Ministry of Culture. The Women's Union has now built a vast headquarters in Sulaimaniya, including event halls and a sauna for women. Qaradagh-C has a kindergarden and a school for primary, intermediate, and secondary classes. To take exams, however, pupils of secondary classes are obliged to travel to the city. Qaradagh-C has a small but ill-equipped health centre and, with no gynaecologist in the area, women are forced to attend a hospital in Sulaimaniya, particularly for first births. Otherwise, they depend on midwives. Physicians and most teachers working in Qaradagh-C are usually young graduates from Sulaimaniya who are required to work for two years outside the city. Hence, the staff rotates every two years and they frequently abandon Qaradagh-C in the afternoon, after work.

13 In 2006, the sub-district of Qaradagh was made a district. Political representation, however, was not granted to the local people. When a mayor was to be appointed in 2007, the PUK appointed a middle-rank female activist from its organization in Sulaimaniya, who was a close friend of the leading PUK official of the city branch. Significantly, the village council system that played a representative role before and, in particular, during the first years after the uprising lost influence in recent years, whereas city-based government authorities and party organizations have expanded.

Biographical Representations of Peripheral Space

14 How is an individual life affected by centre-periphery relations, which subject one's place of residence to multiple forms of dependency, and how do individuals shape these relations? I will now discuss the situation of a young woman living in Qaradagh-C, whom I will call Hêvî. Having met her for the first time in 1993, I did a life-story interview with her in September 2009.[13] Hêvî was born in 1973 as the first daughter of a Qaradagh-based family of religious sheikhs of the Merdoxî lineage. She has two brothers and a sister. Her mother is a housewife. During the interview, Hêvî stressed the cultural role of her forefathers in the 19th century when Qaradagh-C consisted of 10,000 houses, listing sheikhs who had permission to teach and claiming that one of the first judges in Sulaimaniya was her grandfather.

15 This elevated social status through origin had no bearing on her family's economic situation. Hêvî's father worked as a civil servant for the agriculture department. In 1988, the family managed to escape to Sulaimaniya, where Hêvî finished school and completed her professional education. After 1991, the family returned to Qaradagh and

built a new house on the site of their old home. Hêvî emphasized that it did not correspond to the one that was destroyed, which was made of bricks, cement, iron and glass, but was smaller and had one storey only. The walls were plastered with loam and the roof was made of wood and a mixture of loam and straw. In short, it was "just like the houses in the villages". In 1993, Hêvî began to teach the children of the returnees, along with Rengîn, a woman of similar age and education. Around this time, she became a member of the PUK Women's Union. Concurrently, the German NGO Medico International took up its work in the area and opened an office in Qaradagh-C:

> We saw that all of the employees were men, the workers, the guards and so on. As we visited the Women's Union, we said: "Why are there no women?" Then they gave Rengîn and me a job. When their programme ended, our work ended too.

16 In 1995, Hêvî worked in Sulaimaniya in the department that organized public food distributions:

> Three or four times a week, I went to Sulaimaniya in the morning and returned in the afternoon. It was exhausting and the wages did not even cover the daily transport. Back and forth, but I just sat there with nothing to do. Not only me. Nobody had anything to do because at that time there was nothing to distribute.

17 In 1996, Hêvî got a posting back to Qaradagh and worked in the office of the sub-district administration. The sub-district director, however, resided and worked in the city. She continued to be active in the Women's Union and was involved in awareness campaigns on forced marriage, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation. She remarked as regards the latter:

> The circumcision of girls does not exist in Qaradagh-Centre. In the villages, I don't know. Maybe they do it secretly. But we stood up at meetings with them and said this should not happen.

18 Hêvî managed to transform her political commitment into a job when she began working in the Women's Union library. In 1999, she married a man of similar age and education from Qaradagh-C who worked for the security police and who wasn't a relative, she said. Her husband later became head of the security police in Qaradagh-C. In 2009, Hêvî gave birth to male twins in a hospital in Sulaimaniya.

19 In the first years of married life, the couple lived in a house rented from someone residing in Sulaimaniya. Then, the young family succeeded in obtaining one of the ten houses Medico International had built for its personnel and handed over to the government when it left the area. As dual earners, the couple achieved a certain prosperity, visible, for example, in the large, well-equipped kitchen with a hot and cold water dispenser. However, they rent it from the municipality. Most other people in Qaradagh-C live in their own houses, but:

> – People in Qaradagh-Centre have no property certificates. Because the government says they have to survey Qaradagh-Centre and make a new cadastral map. Then people can get deeds for housing.
> – When did the government say this?
> – Years ago! And then, three years ago, Mr. X.[14] came and promised that people would get deeds. But nothing has happened up to now.

20 In September 2009, Hêvî took advantage of maternity leave. It was unclear at the time whether she would continue working in the library. What was clear, however, was the ending of her commitment to the Women's Union. Like many other people in both Qaradagh and Sulaimaniya, she made no secret of voting for the new Sulaimaniya-based oppositional platform Change in the July 2009 elections.[15] In response, the

security police in Sulaimaniya transferred her PUK-loyal husband; he was first sent to a distant checkpoint and later to another. Punishing the brother or husband of a so-called disloyal woman and bringing political strife into people's living rooms and bedrooms is a new method adopted by the PUK to discourage others from joining the opposition. Either way, the case demonstrates yet again the dependency of the inhabitants of Qaradagh-C on the course of events in Sulaimaniya.

21 Many of Hêvî's contemporaries, including her friend Rengîn, moved to Sulaimaniya in the last few years. Did she never feel the desire to live in the city?

> Yes [she said]. After the uprising there was no electricity, no water, and then there were the mosquitoes. My brother, my sister, and I wanted to go back to Sulaimaniya, but my father worked here. So we couldn't live in Sulaimaniya.

22 But then she said:

> Later, I got used to life in Qaradagh. Now, I like it. I don't believe there is any other place that is so calm and quiet.

23 At first, it was taken for granted that an unmarried daughter must remain under her father's control. Later, Hêvî and her husband's respective jobs were the reason for staying. Political activity may have added more meaning to Hêvî's life. Interestingly, she describes Qaradagh-C as "calm and quiet", presenting it as an advantage to live outside the city, which in turn can be understood as drawing a distinction between villagers and city dwellers. Several other such hints at distinction emerged in the course of the interview. Hêvî stressed "the lack of strong social relations", for instance, and compared the "warm" mourning ceremonies in Qaradagh-C with those in Sulaimaniya, which were "colder". However, she did highlight the privileged access to infrastructure as a positive aspect of the city. As already mentioned, she distinguished between villagers and Qaradagh-C with regard to housing and female genital mutilation. She likewise compared the district to other non-city environments when she claimed that people in Qaradagh "do not make trouble" like "hot-tempered men" in other areas, or that forced marriage was not prevalent here because "the people of Qaradagh live near Sulaimaniya and are more aware." The most striking statement of distinction between the village and the city emerged when I asked her what the term "village-like" meant to her, a term, as already mentioned, which is frequently applied pejoratively by the Sulaimaniya middle class. Hêvî's response was:

> That's a very ugly word. And where do the people in the city who use it come from? They all moved from the village to the city. Even today, people from the city are grateful to have the village. They say our cooking fat is village-like. Our yoghurt water is village-like and good. If nobody lived in the village where would they get it from?

24 It is "our" cooking fat and "our" yoghurt: Hêvî was never involved in agricultural production but the widespread negative connotation of this particular term drove her to identify with the villagers of Qaradagh and the non-city environment she lives in. However, her material living conditions and narrations indicate that she neither lives in a "rural" nor in an "urban" space. Rather, her experience can be described as of "rural-urban hybridity".

Technocratic, Academic, and Political Representations of the Periphery

Development

25 According to a new map from the Sulaimaniya Statistics Directorate, Qaradagh-C consists of four quarters: Sharewanî, Hacî, Serhewz, and Number 301. However, people in Qaradagh-C tend to speak of "up" and "down the street", of the "bazaar", or to specify a place by referring to a mosque, a school, a (former) spring, a person, or a house. Sharewanî means "municipality" and got its name from the fact that the seat of the mayor is located there. The word derives from "*şar*": "city". During the 1990s, the original Arabic term "*beledîye*" was used for "municipality", which is also linked to imaginations of city, but not in the exclusive sense of the Kurdish "*şar*". As already indicated, in academic and technocratic discourse, there are contesting representations of Qaradagh-C: it is labelled "urban" by the Statistics Office and a "town" by the geographer 'Ebdulla Ghefûr [2008: 150], whereas World Food Programme[16] and Arian Mahzouni [2008: 78] opt for "rural". This ambiguity is a common phenomenon in Qaradagh-C, as it is in Kurdistan and elsewhere. In our particular case of inner Kurdish centre-periphery relations and their links to "development", it is conspicuous that both Kurdish planners and the administration prefer "urban" and "town" as designations for Qaradagh-C, and invented a name for the quarter that symbolizes the "city", referring to urbanity as a marker of "development". Is their aim to bring Qaradagh-C closer to the "development sky"? At the same time, the government holds Qaradagh-C at a distance: the residence of the new mayor is not in Qaradagh-C, but in Sulaimaniya. As the mayor says, this is because she is a widow and her youngest daughter still a student. Either way, the mayor prefers to visit Qaradagh three to four days a week "to serve the people".[17] Absentee mayors were quite typical under the Ottoman and the Baban rulers.

26 Willingness to pursue development is represented by the new, three-storey building complex for local employees of the Health Department. Other construction projects began in 2008; according to the mayor, however:

> It has not yet been decided to whom the regional government will give the new houses.[18]

27 Along with other actors, the mayor recently founded a league for the development of Qaradagh, but Hêvî's husband, who has joined the group, claimed that its activities are restricted to internal meetings. The most remarkable representation of "development" is the Qaradagh University for Development, which boasts faculties in law, information technology, political science, and translation. It is situated on one of the hills of Qaradagh-C and was inaugurated by the Iraqi president and the leader of the PUK, Jalal Talabani, in December 2008. Will it push modernization forward in Qaradagh-C? The University of Koye, inaugurated by Talabani in 2004, contributed to the construction boom and the growth in population in Koye, an old city quite far from Sulaimaniya and Erbil. In the case of Qaradagh-C, lecturers and students will most likely commute to work in Qaradagh-C from Sulaimaniya.

28 Since employees from Sulaimaniya regularly commute to Qaradagh-C and people like Hêvî have always been connected to the city through employment, it could be argued that Qaradagh-C is essentially part of the Sulaimaniya city agglomeration rather than a

peripheral space. In fact, Sulaimaniya's territorial expansion has already led to the agglomeration of numerous surrounding villages. Qaradagh, in contrast, lacks the water and flat land required for construction, and, up to now, the shortest way to Qaradagh-C is across the mountains.

Great History

29 In Iraqi-Kurdish historiography, Qaradagh is mentioned as a geographical place, and there are individual agents from Qaradagh who live in Sulaimaniya, i.e., religious sheikhs, judges, teachers and artists [Zakkî 1951; Salihî Reşe and Resûl 1987; Baban 1993; Mamosta Ce'fer 2006].

30 I recently found a short history of Qaradagh on the Kurdish website www.merdox.net. The narration stresses the ancient history of the area and centres on two points, the first of which is a rock relief identified elsewhere as a "prototype of the celebrated 'Stele of Victory' erected by Naram-Sin of Akkad" [Edmonds 1957: 360]. Naram-Sin was an Akkadian king who lived 2190-2154 BC. The author, 'Ela Nûrî Baba 'Elî, refers to Edmonds but presents the rock relief as "massive evidence for the fact that the Qopî Qaradagh was a centre of the struggle of the Kurdish nation some thousand years ago". The second point is the name Qaradagh. Referring to Kurdish historians, the author argues that it is reminiscent of a Turkish term meaning "Black Mountain" but has its origin in "*kardax*" or "*kardox*" clearly echoing "*kardukh*", i.e., the name Xenophon gave the ancient people of the Zagros Mountains, who are believed to be the ancestors of today's Kurds.[19]

31 These two narrations are established in Kurdish historiography. Local people such as those of Qaradagh are often familiar with single fragments of these narratives. It also explains why Hêvî – when I met her in 1994 – was keen for me to visit "Naram-Sin". From a nationalist point of view, however, it makes sense to repeat those narratives, and to expand and strengthen the argument, and transform it into popular knowledge of broader significance. The www.merdox.net website is run by actors outside Qaradagh whose parents or ancestors emigrated and are commonly called Qaradaghî. It also publishes texts written by people living in Qaradagh-C. Although not the focus of the website, most texts in the frame "History" refer to Qaradagh. The name "Merdox" is a reference to Hêvî's forefathers. The website advertises Kurdish TV stations, not least those of the PUK. In line with the idea of Qaradagh-C as an ideal university location, Burhan Sheikh Mecîd, a retired teacher living in Qaradagh-C, published a short text on "How Qaradagh became a place of knowledge": in the late 18th century when "Qaradagh-C had 6,000 houses", "the Baban emir founded a university *(danişga)*". The site remained a place of knowledge until 1965, when "Qaradagh was again burnt down".[20] Clearly, the aim of such texts is not merely to revalue the countryside but to use Qaradagh as a symbol in nationalist discourse to legitimize political acts and nationalist domination.

Peaceful Farmers and Salary Consumers

32 The *Kurdistan-î Nwê* newspaper produced a full page on Qaradagh on 11 October 2009. Since Sulaimaniya's peripheral space is generally marginalized in PUK journalism, this was unexpected. The page consisted of an interview with the mayor, her photograph, a

biographical column and a panorama shot of Qaradagh-C. The interview headline read: "Road and Water Projects to Be Implemented in Qaradagh for 11 Billion Dinars", that is, converted, 7 million euros. Journalist Rizgar Qaradaghî writes in his introduction:

> From an administrative perspective, Qaradagh consists of the centre of the district, the sub-district Sêwsênan, and 86 villages. The number of inhabitants is stated to be 12,000. *The business of this region* [my emphasis] was agriculture and animal breeding, but the dry year[s] is the reason that led to abandoning agriculture. What is left for the farmers who stayed is animal breeding. Some of the others *receive salaries from the civil services (muçexor-e le fermangekan-da)*. In general, the Qaradaghîs are well-educated, poor, and far from violence and conflict, or making trouble.

33 Village means agriculture. Some of the others receive salaries from the civil services, literally "salary-eaters in the state agencies". There is nothing in Kurdish to prevent people from saying "some are civil servants" rather than the pejorative term "*muçexor* ". The people of Qaradagh are otherwise represented as peaceful and well-educated farmers, an outlook reminiscent of Hêvî's reflections. The text makes no further reference to the lives of people in Qaradagh, leaving the impression of a faceless mass. Furthermore, no distinction is made between the people of the villages and those of Qaradagh-C.

34 The repetition of the introductory text at the end of the interview makes it difficult to detect whether the mayor or the journalist is speaking. The text is both a journalistic and a political representation, or, more precisely, the representation of representations, since "represented conversations [...] are nothing but tidied-up versions of real talk" [Caldas-Coulthard 1995: 229]. Since the newspaper primarily serves PUK interests, the topic is not Qaradagh. Rather is the topic the distinguished politics of the Kurdish government – as represented by the words of the mayor, a woman "originally from Qaradagh", whose husband was "a person of Kurdish-national and revolutionary beliefs [...] and became a martyr in 1991". In response to the question of whether she as a woman was prone to "emotionalism", the narration lets the mayor promise to do her job "according to the law, which does not go with emotionalism". The text presents the mayor as a politically loyal woman who solves everyday problems, particularly those of local women, who "express their demands by letter or peaceful demonstration". Finally, the narration permits the mayor to call on the provincial council of Sulaimaniya for more commitment, so that the budget allocated to Qaradagh "will definitely be spent on the people of this place". It is evident from the text that the mayor does not make major decisions. The provincial council, the governor, the Kurdish government and the party are all above her. Be it millions or billions, the headline makes a promise, but the text does not reveal a plan. And the representation of the Qaradaghis does not contribute to a more sophisticated image of the inhabitants, rather to the making of the "rural other" and to increasing peripherization. However, what impact such a text may have ultimately depends on how it is read; on whether the reader perceives the text in a way of – to adopt Stuart Hall's terms [1980] – dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional reading.

Conclusion

35 Qaradagh-C seems to be both too far and too near the city of Sulaimaniya, of which it has become a peripheral space due to economic and political circumstances. Hêvî's self-representations give an impression of what unilateral dependency means in everyday

life from a biographical perspective. They also indicate the options and agendas people pursue in their endeavour to work around or resist dependency. The academic, technocratic, and political representations described in my paper express, and at the same time shape, the process of peripherization. Calling something "development" and rendering it "urban" with signifying acts will not halt this process if economic and political dependency persists. On the contrary, dependence is reinforced here by the dominance of city-based agents, performances of centre superiority, and constructs portraying the faceless "rural other". Neither does peripherization cease with cultural revaluation of the countryside as an element of nationalist discourse. From my perspective, there is nothing wrong with "sustainable community-driven development" as suggested by Arian Mahzouni [2008]. There is, however, no sign of this so far.

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NOTES

1. For Kurdish and Arabic geographical and personal names, I use a simplified transliteration.

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3. All quotations from Kurdish and Arabic are my own translations.

4. Sulaimaniya Statistics Directorate (SSD), "Poxteyek le diyarîkirdin-î hêl-î nebûn-î xorakî-u naxorakî" ("Extract of Identifying the Poverty Level"). Ministry of Planning (not published), 2009, p. 4.

5. UNWFP, "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis in Iraq", 2008, pp. 203-217.

6. On *Anfal,* see Middle East Watch, "Genocide in Iraq. The *Anfal* Campaign against the Kurds", New York, Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1993. See also HRW, "Bureaucracy and Repression", New York, 1994. On the uprising and Kurdish elections in 1991-1992, see D. Keen [1993] and H. Cook [1995].

7. SSD, "Pêşbîni geşeyî danîştuwanî-î parêzga-î Slêmanî bo sal-î 2009" ("Prognosis of Population Growth of 2009"). Ministry of Planning (not published), 2009, p. 1.

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8. Information from the Sulaimaniya Statistics Office, September 2009.

9. Middle East Watch, "Genocide in Iraq. The *Anfal* Campaign against the Kurds". New York, HRW, 1993, pp. 113-124, 361.

10. For the use of the term "capital", I rely on the work of Pierre Bourdieu [1986].

11. Interview with the Mayor of Qaradagh, Shîrîn Mehmûd Salih, Qaradagh, 26 September 2009.

12. *Ibid.*

13. The interview was conducted and evaluated following the approach of "narration analysis of biographical self-presentation" as outlined by W. Fischer and G. Fischer-Rosenthal [1997]. On the "biographical turn", see also P. Chamberlayne *et al.* eds. [2000].

14. Hêvî mentions a high-ranking PUK and government official. In order to protect her, I do not state his full name.

15. Change (Goran) was established as an election platform in 2009 by the private media company Wusha Corporation headed by Noshirwan Mustafa Amin, a guerrilla leader and PUK politician who was born in 1944 in Sulaimaniya. In the election of July 2009, Change gained 25 of the 111 seats.

16. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis in Iraq", 2008, p. 202.

17. Interview with Shîrîn Mehmûd Salih.

18. *Ibid.*

19. See http://www.merdox.net/news.php?readmore=16, 23 July 2009, accessed on 1 September 2009.

20. See http://www.merdox.net/news.php?readmore=36, 28 August 2009, accessed on 1 September 2009.

RÉSUMÉS

Résumé :
Les villes de Erbil, Dohuk et Sulaimaniya sont décrites comme des espaces de croissance économique et de développement. Cet article s'intéresse au fossé qui, au Kurdistan irakien, sépare les villes « prospères » des quartiers « extrêmement vulnérables ». L'exemple de Qaradagh, un district du gouvernorat de Sulaymaniya, montre que plusieurs facteurs contribuent à sa dépendance économique et politique vis-à-vis de Sulaymaniya, ce qu'illustrent les entretiens que nous avons menés sur place. Même si, à première vue, les représentations technnocratiques, académiques et politiques semblent inclure Qaradagh dans les projets de développement, en réalité, très peu est fait pour réduire sa dépendance. Au contraire, ces représentations accentuent le processus de périphérisation.

The large cities of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniya in Iraqi Kurdistan are described as places of economic growth and development. This article focuses on the sharp discrepancies between "better-off" cities and "extremely vulnerable" districts. The example of Qaradagh, a district center in the governorate of Sulaimaniya, is used to argue that a combination of circumstances has resulted in the town's economic and political dependency on Sulaimaniya, the consequences of this being illustrated through biographical accounts. Technocratic, academic and political

conceptions seem at first sight to incorporate Qaradagh in development projects but, in fact, do little to reduce this dependency. On the contrary, they shape the process of peripheralization.

INDEX

Mots-clés : urbain/rural, périphérisation, représentations cognitives, district de Qaradagh, Kurdistan irakien
Keywords : cognitive representations, peripheralization, Qaradagh District Center, Iraqi Kurdistan, rural/urban